



GREATEST BARS to health are day-to-day strains in the busy life of the professional.

EMOTION STRESSED IN MD HEART TROUBLE

The difference in degree of stress between general practice and surgery may be an important factor in coronary disease incidence among MDs - even more important than their smoking habits (see p. 60).

Noted cardiologist Henry I. Russek suggests this new approach to the problem of tobacco and heart diseases on the basis of two recent studies, covering a total of almost 15,000 doctors, dentists and lawyers.

Professional Smokers

In his first study, of 2500 professional men, Dr. Russek uncovered a surprising fact: the incidence of heart disease was no higher among men who had quit smoking than among those who had never smoked. Those who smoked 20 cigarettes a day had an 11.6 per cent incidence of cardiovascular disease, slightly more than twice the rate of 4.6 per cent for nonsmokers and ex-smokers.

This suggested that perhaps personality might be the missing item. "If emotional strain is the contributing factor, the better prognosis found among those who have given up smok-

ing may be a consequence of their greater capacity for adapting to stress."

In his second study, covering 3000 "general practitioners" and 9000 specialists in medicine, dentistry and the law, he found statistical support.

"General practitioners and anesthesiologists, physicians judged to be under relatively high stress, showed distinctly higher heart disease rates than dermatologists and pathologists, whose professional lives are generally less stressful. Similarly, oral surgeons had higher rates than periodontists or orthodontists; trial lawyers appeared more prone to cardiovascular disease than patent attorneys. In each case, the results were 'statistically highly significant,'" Dr. Russek told the AMA.

From the first study, Dr. Russek notes, "it is not clear whether tobacco consumption is causally related to coronary atherosclerosis or is merely a reflection of the augmented psychic stress and personality make-up of the coronary-prone individual."

But the two studies taken together "cast significant doubt upon the role of tobacco in the pathogenesis of atherosclerosis." ■

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